**Request for Information Number: RFI-OAA-17-000100**
**Date of Issue: Monday, November 7, 2016**
**Issued by: USAID/LAB**
**Issued Through: Office of Acquisition and Assistance**
**Closing Date for Comments/Questions: Monday, November 14, 2016**
**Closing Date for Submissions: Friday, December 2, 2016**
**Closing time: 17:00 EDT**
**Notice Type: Sources Sought**

**Subject: USAID/LAB Request for Information on programming to increase the use of scientific research to improve development outcomes**

**To: All Interested Respondents/Parties:**

Referring to FAR 52.215-3 Request for Information (Oct. 1997), the United States Government, represented by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the Center for Development Research in the Global Development Lab (LAB), is publishing the subject Request for Information in order to obtain information and input from all interested public and private parties on its primary objective to increase the use of scientific research to improve development outcomes.

This announcement is a Request for Information (RFI), issued solely for information and planning purposes, and **so it does not constitute a Request for Applications (RFA) or a Request for Proposal (RFP).** Responses to this RFI are not applications or official proposals and will in no way be deemed to form any binding agreement with the RFI issuing authority.

**This RFI will not be construed as a commitment by the U.S. Government to issue any solicitation, award any grant, or pay for any information submitted as a result of this request. Responders are solely responsible for bearing all expenses associated with preparation and submission of the response to this RFI.**

It is the potential applicant's responsibility to monitor the site for the release of any further information. It should be noted that responding to this RFI will not give any advantage to any organization in any subsequent procurement. Respondents may submit clarifying questions regarding the content of the RFI through 17:00 EDT on November 14, 2016. USAID will review and publish consolidated responses on FBO.gov to questions whose answers could potentially provide needed clarity for all respondents no later than November 21, 2016. USAID reserves the right to answer none, some, or all, questions submitted in response to this RFI. Questions should be sent to LABCDR_Feedback@usaid.gov with the Subject line reading: "CDR-RFI_*Clarifying Question_respondent's institution*". USAID will not provide answers to any questions submitted in response to this RFI that deal with the specific content, schedule, or details of a future procurement.

**Background:**
The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and its partners have been working to tackle the world's toughest development challenges for more than 50 years. Our mission is to partner to end extreme poverty and promote resilient, democratic societies while advancing our security and prosperity. We have long invested in science, technology, innovation, and partnership (STIP) to achieve progress. Today's global development landscape is rapidly evolving. Driven by scientific breakthroughs, disruptive innovation, and rapid advancements in information and communication technologies (ICT), coupled with growing contributions by the private sector, these changes offer unprecedented opportunities to leverage the world's best thinking to solve critical global challenges.

Recognizing the value of a more focused and coordinated approach to harnessing these changes, USAID established the U.S. Global Development Lab (Lab) in April 2014. The Lab serves as an innovation hub. We take smart risks to test new ideas and partner within the Agency and with other actors to harness the power of innovative tools and approaches that accelerate development impact.

**Our Approach**
The Lab operates under a set of guiding principles. We are:

- Open and Inclusive - Drawing upon the ingenuity of people from around the world.
- Evidence-based - Investing based on strong evidence of impact.
- Catalytic - Attracting the support of others to enable sustainable development solutions that reach massive scale.
- Agile - Creating fast feedback loops that enable continuous learning and performance improvement.

**Our Tools**
The Lab is focused on Science, Technology, Innovation, and Partnership. We work across USAID and with the broader international development community to find innovative tools and methods. When a new solution or approach proves effective, we mainstream it across USAID and with our partners to increase its impact.

The Center for Development Research (CDR) leads the Lab's Science Objective, which aims to increase the use of scientific research to improve development outcomes. CDR recognizes the excellent work in research and development (R&D) being pursued by Bureaus and Missions across USAID. CDR seeks to complement this work as we partner on research programming and coordination across the agency. CDR currently partners with USAID colleagues, other federal agencies, universities, NGOs, and the private sector to increase the scientific knowledge and evidence directed toward addressing USAID's development priorities and improving policy and programming decisions.

CDR is currently composed of three flagship programs, the Higher Education Solutions Network, the Partnership for Enhanced Engagement in Research, and the Science Policy programs (including USAID Research Policy and Coordination, AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellows, Jefferson Science Fellows, Seeding Labs, and Research and Innovation Fellows). As some of these programs are near the

end of their periods of performance, CDR is using this opportunity to conduct a strategic review its programming.

CDR programming is, and will continue to be, centered on the Lab's Science Objective: Increase the use of scientific research for improved development outcomes. More specifically, CDR will strive to increase the use of scientific research to inform policies, programs, and innovative solutions (i.e. tools, technologies and approaches) to development challenges.

**Potential Areas for Programming**

CDR has identified four potential areas for programming that appear to be important to achieving the Science Objective.

1. **Generate Evidence through Innovative Research Approaches:** CDR may support research programming that generates evidence in response to unfilled knowledge needs. CDR encourages the adoption of integrated, systems-based solutions with the greatest potential for transformative impact.

2. **Facilitate the Translation of Research to Impact:** CDR may support programming that helps make research actionable so that development actors can use, apply, and integrate research into their development work. This may entail improving access to research, synthesis and translation of research, as well as communication and connections between researchers and other actors involved in development.

3. **Improve USAID's Use of Research**: CDR may work with other USAID Bureaus and Missions to integrate research across the USAID Program Cycle in the strategic planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of USAID projects and activities.

4. **Accelerate Local Scientific Potential**: CDR may partner with other development actors to unlock barriers that researchers and institutions in low and middle income countries face in conducting research, which in turn may promote local economic growth and sustainable, long-term development impacts.

**Cross-Cutting Principles**

CDR has also identified several cross-cutting principles that appear to be foundational to successful programming across each of the areas outlined above. CDR seeks to embed the following characteristics in the design of its activities and programs and asks the public for its best ideas. It is not necessary for all of the following characteristics to be present in all ideas or potential activities. Rather, these are presented here as guiding characteristics or elements that CDR aims to integrate into our overall programming portfolio.

**Foster Open, Inclusive, and Catalytic Partnerships:** CDR seeks to expand its current networks of research partners to encompass a broad range of expertise and capabilities. Throughout its activities, CDR intends to prioritize working with researchers and institutions in low and middle income countries.

Additionally, CDR will continue to partner with universities, the private sector, NGOs, federal agencies, scientific academies, and other institutions. CDR brings together large numbers of science, innovation, and problem solving communities, and leverages their resources and expertise to tackle problems defined by USAID and our host-country partners.

**Focus on Demand-Driven Research**: CDR will support research products that are demand-driven in that they respond to a demonstrated need, identified by an USAID Bureau or Mission, local stakeholder, or other development actor.

**Leverage the Global Scientific Community:** CDR will bolster its efforts to engage the global research community and direct their expertise, energy, and resources towards international development challenges. CDR also aims to unlock the potential of host-country institutions, in partnership with USAID Missions, to support their own research systems.

**Create Agile, Evidence-based Programming**: CDR will embrace the principles of adaptive management. We will design activities that are flexible and able to adjust to program performance as well as changing conditions in local contexts and shifting priorities from the Agency. CDR will support a culture of evidence-based decision-making by encouraging the use of scientific data and evidence in all elements of program design, implementation, and evaluation.

**Request for Information:**
Through this RFI, CDR seeks ideas, comments, and information from the public that will assist CDR as it develops a programming portfolio that will most effectively achieve the objectives described above. CDR asks that the public submit short (<4 pages) submissions that outline program recommendations, provide context, explain existing capacities, or give other information pertinent to the design of USAID/CDR programming relevant to the above objectives and programming areas. Please also provide your name, title, organization, and contact information in your response. You may also wish to respond to the questions listed below in your submission. CDR encourages the use of the response template (Appendix 1), where possible. The bounds of this RFI are intentionally broad as this represents a conceptual phase of planning and USAID is using this RFI to inform our market research in this arena. USAID reserves the right to potentially issue subsequent RFI's on this topic that target more specific questions or approaches.

In particular, CDR is interested in responses to the following questions. Respondents are encouraged to review the questions and include responses to the most relevant questions in their submissions. Respondents do not need to respond to all the questions listed below.

1. Are the four potential areas for programming sufficient to *increase the use of scientific research for improved development outcomes,* specifically with respect to impact on policy change, program effectiveness, and the development/implementation of innovative solutions?
    a. Of the four potential areas for programming, where do you see the greatest opportunity for CDR to have impact? What can USAID contribute that is unique compared to other actors in this space?

b. Are there other potential areas for programming that CDR should consider in lieu of one or more of those described above?

2. How might you or your organization design an innovative and unique approach to the potential areas for programming (please choose the most relevant area for your expertise) in alignment with the characteristics outlined above.
3. How can CDR incentivize researchers and policy makers to collaborate on effective translation of research findings (potential area for programming #2 above) that maximizes development impact? What technical assistance could CDR provide to make the translation of research more effective?
4. Please outline the characteristics of an activity that would help USAID to increase the use of research as it informs the strategic planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of USAID programming (potential area for programming #3 above).
5. What are the primary barriers inhibiting the conduct of high-quality research in developing countries? How can CDR partner with US universities, private institutions, and other donors to mitigate those barriers so that sustainable research ecosystems/environments are realized (potential area for programming #4)?
6. Are there other cross-cutting principles that CDR should incorporate across its programming in lieu of one or more of the cross-cutting principles described above?

**RFI Submission:**

All types of organizations and firms (large and small businesses) are strongly encouraged to provide information/comments by the closing date and time noted on page 1. Submission via email is required; phone calls or hard copy delivery will not be accepted. In-person, public discussion of this RFI will occur on Wednesday, November 9, 2016 during a public Industry Day pre-meeting immediately prior to the Technical Convening of USAID's Higher Education Solutions Network. RSVP required, please see http://www.hesntechcon.com for further information on USAID's *Industry Day: Exploring Research in Development*. (NOTE: Attendance at the in person Industry Day is expected to be capped at 50 people and 1 person per organization.)

The total length of the RFI submission should not be longer than **four** pages. Submission shall use only size 11 Times New Roman font or similar size typeset, 8.5 inch by 11-inch paper, and single-spaced pages for all narrative documents, with each page numbered consecutively. Respondents are encouraged to use the optional response template at the end of this RFI (Appendix 1). Respondents are encouraged to copy and paste Appendix 1 into a new document, provide their responses in that document, and email that document with the file name saved as:
"CDR-RFI-*respondent's last name-respondent's institution.*"

If the submitter has produced relevant reports, those reports may be included, preferably as embedded links. If the reports are not online, they may be submitted as attached documents. The submission must be in English. In addition, if any notional monetary units are provided they must be in USD.

Please **do not** submit applications, proposals, or resumes as they will be discarded.

Responses will be held confidential. Proprietary information should not be sent. Submissions will not be acknowledged nor will responses be sent. USAID may use any information provided without incurring any obligation. USAID/LAB reserves the right to, or not to, incorporate any, some, or none of the comments received from this RFI into any subsequent solicitations.

Please submit electronic written information by December 2, 2016, no later than 17:00 p.m. EDT. E-mail submission shall be sent to: LABCDR_Feedback@usaid.gov with the Subject line reading: "CDR-RFI_*respondent's last name_respondent's institution*".

Thank you for your interest and assistance in USAID/LAB/CDR programs.

Sincerely,

Roderick Watson
Senior Agreement/Contracting Officer
USAID M/OAA/SIDP

**Appendix 1 USAID/CDR RFI Optional Response Template**

Name:
Title:
Organization:
Email:

A. Please outline below any general program recommendations, relevant context, existing capacities, or other information pertinent to the design of USAID/CDR programming relevant its objectives and programming areas that you would like to share here:

B. In addition to the general feedback requested above, CDR is also interested in responses to the following specific questions. (Respondents are encouraged to review the questions and include responses to the most relevant questions in their submissions. Respondents do not need to respond to all the questions listed below.)

1. Are the four potential areas for programming sufficient to *increase the use of scientific research for improved development outcomes,* specifically with respect to impact on policy change, program effectiveness, and the development/implementation of innovative solutions?

    a. Of the four potential areas for programming, where do you see the greatest opportunity for CDR to have impact?

    b. Are there other potential areas for programming that CDR should consider in lieu of one or more of those described above?

2. How might you or your organization design an innovative and unique approach to the potential areas for programming (please choose the most relevant area for your expertise) in alignment with the characteristics outlined above.

3. How can CDR incentivize researchers and policy makers to collaborate on effective translation of research findings (potential area for programming #2 above) that maximizes development impact? What technical assistance could CDR provide to make those the translation of research more effective?

4. Please outline the characteristics of an activity that would help USAID to increase the use of research as it informs the strategic planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of USAID programming (potential area for programming #3 above).

5. What are the primary barriers inhibiting the conduct of high-quality research in developing countries? How can CDR partner with US universities, private institutions, and other donors to

mitigate those barriers so that sustainable research ecosystems/environments are realized (potential area for programming #4)?

6. Are there other cross-cutting principles that CDR should incorporate across its programming in lieu of one or more of the cross-cutting principles described above?